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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000213

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SUBJECT: PLOTTING KOUYATE'S DEMISE

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11. (S) SUMMARY. An LES staff member provides useful insights into an alleged plot orchestrated by former members of government against Guinea's former PM, Lansana Kouyate. Inside information suggests that the PM's demise was well planned and well orchestrated. END SUMMARY.

12. (S) A senior LES staff member, who has extensive personal relationships with high-level government officials and their staff, provided Poloff with details about an alleged plot to oust former Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate (reftel). LES' information reportedly came from multiple sources within the presidential palace, the prime minister's office, and civil society. LES also claims to be an old friend of the new prime minister, Dr. Ahmed Tidiane Souare.

13. (S) According to LES sources, a core group of former ministers drafted a decree replacing Kouyate with Souare at least four months ago, but they had been having difficulty getting the president to sign it because First Lady Henriette Conte had been blocking access to the president. A former minister of finance between 1996 and 2001, Kassory Fofana, is believed to be the primary instigator. Reportedly, Kassory was one of Conte's closest advisors during his time as minister. LES told Poloff that Kassory "was the only person who could take Conte's package of cigarettes, remove a cigarette, and start smoking it in front of him." Kassory has been reportedly living in the United States since he left government, but recently returned to Guinea where he has been staying in a local hotel. He is seen as a close friend of former prime minister Cellou Diallo. LES sources report that Kassory was working closely with a former minister of transport, Ibrahima Keira.

14. (S) After having been repeatedly blocked by Henriette Conte, one month ago Kassory and Keira reportedly went to Kindia, which is located about two hours from the capital, in order to regroup. At that time, they decided that Keira would travel to Morocco in order to bring the president's second wife, Kadiatou, back to Conakry with the idea that Conte would be obligated to visit his second wife, thereby sidestepping Henriette. (NOTE. Keira's own wife is apparently Kadiatou's older sister. END NOTE). They proceeded according to plan. Keira brought Kadiatou back to Conakry and Kassory had Conte sign the decree while the president was staying with Kadiatou.

15. (S) LES sources report that Henriette was protecting Kouyate because the former prime minister was providing her with direct financial support. One contact said that Kouyate had build her a house in Paris. (COMMENT. Since Henriette has no visible income stream of her own, it is possible that money would have been attractive in order to build up some personal security in the face of her husband's declining

health. END COMMENT).

¶16. (S) Drawing on his personal relationship with the new PM, LES said that he went to visit Souare at home last night about 30 minutes after hearing the announcement of his appointment. LES reported that several members of the former government were there, including Keira and the former minister of interior Kiridy Bangorah. According to LES, Keira and Kiridy were visibly elated at the news of the appointment, suggesting that they may be angling for official appointments in the new government. LES contact said that Keira wants to be Guinea's Ambassador to the United Nations, but knew that he would never get the appointment under Kouyate.

¶17. (S) LES mentioned that he had also spoken with Ben Sekou Syllah, the president of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), and former president of the National Council of Civil Society Organizations. LES said that Syllah was not part of the plot, but that Kassory approached Syllah and asked for his support in order to control any possible negative reaction from civil society to Kouyate's dismissal. Syllah, who has been highly critical of Kouyate during meetings with Poloff, told LES that Kouyate had started his own political party, the Convergence of Guinean Patriots (CPG), despite claims to the contrary (reftel). According to Syllah, the party is still operational and Kouyate was using it as a mechanism to obtain financing in anticipation of running for president in 2010. Syllah also said that Kouyate had no interest in legislative elections and was actively blocking the process.

¶18. (S) According to presidential sources, Conte wants to take a more active role in governing the country. The president reportedly wants to begin chairing some, if not all, of the weekly council of ministers meetings. One source reported that palace staff have already prepared a conference room at the Presidential Palace for that purpose.

¶19. (S) LES commented that Souare is close to the old system and not seen as a reformer. He said that Souare is loyal to Conte and will not go against the president in order to advance any particular agenda. However, sources told LES that Souare is still interested in "change," but he will only do it in coordination with the president.

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COMMENT  
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¶10. (S) LES is extremely well connected and has provided reliable information in the past, as well as thoughtful, relevant analysis. It is unclear whether he has a personal agenda in sharing certain information, but he is perceived as neither pro-Conte nor pro-Kouyate. His information, which tends to corroborate other sensitive reporting, offer useful insights into what might be happening behind the scenes at the presidential palace. END COMMENT.

CARTER